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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6381
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 000385

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RO](#)
SUBJECT: SENIOR PSD OFFICIAL ON NEW CABINET, IRAQ, BASESCU
IMPEACHMENT, GEOANA VISIT TO US

Classified By: Polcouns Theodore Tanoue for 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: PSD Vice President Diaconescu predicted easy parliamentary approval of the new Cabinet line-up proposed by Prime Minister Tariceanu. He also predicted that the Constitutional Court would rule against President Basescu, adding further substance to efforts to remove him. Diaconescu also confirmed that the PSD would continue to press for Basescu's suspension, and evinced confidence that once out of office, Basescu as a "common citizen" would quickly lose his aura of invincibility and would lose the referendum on his permanent removal. On the foreign policy front, Diaconescu said that PSD President Geoana wanted to reassure US policymakers during his upcoming Washington visit that the PSD would be a good partner of the USG. On Iraq, his message will be that "we shall stay". End Summary.

¶2. (C) At a meeting with Polcouns 4/3 Social Democratic Party (PSD) Vice President Cristian Diaconescu remarked that the new Cabinet unveiled by Prime Minister Tariceanu the previous day was noticeably weak compared to the previous one, including in Foreign Affairs, Economics/Finance, Education, and the Ministry of Justice. He described Foreign Minister-designate Adrian Cioroianu as a policy lightweight, adding that he had a superficial grasp of foreign policy and little experience managing a large bureaucracy; Justice Minister-designate Tudor Chiuariu, on the other hand was a "disastrous choice." He argued that Theodor Melescanu's appointment as Defense Minister was "not bad"; Melescanu would try to "bridge" the gap between the "populist" wing of the PNL that was calling for the immediate withdrawal of Romanian forces from Iraq, and military professionals who sought to protect Romania's reputation for reliability and its good relations with the US. Diaconescu said that the new cabinet will be approved by Parliament with little problem, and evinced confidence that all of the nominees would be sworn in soon by President Basescu. (note: Basescu has moved slowly on the nomination, and reportedly plans to defer a decision on swearing in the new cabinet until after he hears the decision from the Constitutional Court on the Cioroianu case.)

¶3. (C) Diaconescu said that the Constitutional Court would also render its decision April 4 on the Cioroianu case, which would decide the issue of whether President Basescu had the authority to reject individual Cabinet nominations. He predicted that the court would rule against Basescu, adding yet more substance to charges that he had overstepped his constitutional role as President. When queried as to what was the legitimate role of a Romanian President, Diaconescu responded that it was better state what a President should not do: he should not be "violent"; should not abuse the limits of his authority; should not trample on the institutional prerogatives of other branches of government;

and should not abuse his own powers in the areas of foreign affairs, security, and the intelligence services.

14. (C) Diaconescu also confirmed that the PSD would continue to push for Basescu's suspension, irrespective of how the Constitutional Court ruled on the charges brought against the President by the Voiculescu Commission. He acknowledged that recent opinion polls revealed a substantial majority (more than 60 percent) of Romanian citizens opposed removal of the President. However, he predicted (with barely concealed glee) that when Basescu became a "common citizen" during his suspension, he would "disappear" from the public eye. Diaconescu predicted that the PD would turn on Basescu and that "new skeletons would appear" out of Basescu's closet. In addition to Basescu's losing all of his "instruments of power" during his suspension period, Diaconescu predicted that the government would take "necessary measures" to assure that Basescu lost the referendum vote on his removal, noting that it would be an Interior Minister from the PNL who would be responsible for organizing the referendum vote.

15. (C) Diaconescu predicted that Basescu could counterattack by bringing up allegations of misdeeds by his political enemies, warning that the PD could use the intelligence services and other government organs to "throw dirt" on Tariceanu. He also said it was not impossible to foresee a scenario where both the President and the Prime Minister were removed for their misdeeds. Diaconescu had little comment regarding the non-participation of the Conservative Party's in the next Cabinet, except to say that the decision had been Prime Minister Tariceanu's. (note: the meeting with Diaconescu predated by several hours the news that the Anti-Corruption Directorate (DNA) is investigating charges of money laundering by Voiculescu and his daughter.)

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16. (C) Diaconescu also predicted continued political turmoil, musing that it might continue for "two or three, maybe as long as six or eight months." While the best way to achieve a new political balance was through elections, the PSD was still too weak to contest elections, and supporting a minority PNL-UDMR government was the "next best" way to achieve stability. He added that one continuing dilemma for the opposition was that there was no clearcut opponent to Traian Basescu for President, perhaps with the exception of an "even worse" alternative--Gigi Bacali. He said that Geoana had his eyes on the Prime Ministership, not the Presidency. Asked about whether the PSD would nominate candidates for sub-cabinet positions in the new government, Diaconescu insisted that the party would not participate in governance. He added that while the PSD "formally" supported the new Tariceanu cabinet, it was likely that the PSD would attack the government "daily."

17. (C) Asked about the upcoming Washington visit by PSD President Mircea Geoana, Diaconescu replied that Geoana wanted to present the PSD's point of view directly to Washington policymakers and to underscore that there was no change in the PSD's pro-US, pro-Atlanticist posture in 2003-04, when the party was in power. Another message was reassurance that the PSD was going to be a "normal, positive, and responsible" party capable of restoring political stability to Romania. Geoana also wanted to provide reassurance to Washington that the PSD will have nothing to do with Vadim Tudor's PRM. He acknowledged that Tudor had sought the Presidency of the Romanian Senate in exchange for the PRM's political support, but insisted that the PSD would "not deal" with the PRM.

18. (C) Diaconescu also noted that Geoana wanted to convey the message that the PSD would be a reliable partner to the US on the foreign policy front. Asked about Iraq, he responded that the PSD position was that "we shall stay". He later mused that the party needed to "figure out some way" to explain to the public the necessity for keeping Romanian

forces deployed in Iraq, although part of the price might be the withdrawal of some troops whose missions were clearly accomplished. On Kosovo, Diaconescu said that the PSD wanted to "make itself useful" including disabusing the Serbs of the idea that Romania would somehow break with NATO or the EU and to join the Russians in opposing the Ahtisaari plan. Diaconescu added that Russia was another major foreign policy preoccupation for the PSD. Russia was making a "serious effort" to break into the Romanian market and to buy Romanian enterprises. This was coupled with the traditional Russian paternalism towards Romania, which Moscow viewed as a prodigal child; "you'll come back" is the Russian view of Romania, he noted. Diaconescu added that Russia's main concern was with NATO, not the EU. While the Russians saw the EU as an opportunity, they saw NATO as a problem, he concluded.

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